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RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND THE SECURITY DIMENSION: UKRAINIAN-EUROPEAN INTERACTION

Background. The article substantiates that religious tolerance is one of the fundamental values of modern democratic society, contributing to the preservation of peace, ensuring stability, and fostering mutual understanding among various national and ethnocultural communities. It is established that in contemporary secularized society, issues of religious tolerance acquire particular significance. It is proven that a significant portion of the population exhibits aggressive attitudes primarily due to insufficient information about believers of other denominations. The author of the article asserts that religious processes in Ukraine are closely linked to the security dimension of both individual states and the international community.

Methods. A number of methods were applied during the writing of the article: historical analysis was used to study interconfessional and state-church relations in dynamics and historical retrospect; content analysis was employed to examine the current situation in the security space of the religious sphere; the hermeneutic method was used to study the Statutes and main sacred texts of the confessions represented in Ukraine; the comparative method served to compare data indicators from the State Service for Ethnic Policy and religious reports and statistics; the method of expert evaluations and statistical analysis was used to interpret various sociological data related to interconfessional tolerance. The use of a range of philosophical and general scientific methods made it possible to comprehensively study and forecast the confessional structure of Ukrainian society.

Results. It is determined that Ukraine, as part of the European space, actively cooperates with international institutions in ensuring interfaith peace and protecting the rights and freedoms of believers. The fight against religious discrimination in Ukraine is declared at the highest level. However, it is demonstrated that in the context of contemporary challenges—primarily open warfare, migration processes, and the rise of radical sentiments—issues of religious tolerance constitute an integral part of the strategy for ensuring national and international security.

Conclusions. Thus, the article proves that the issue of religious tolerance and the security dimension in the context of Ukrainian-European interaction is both relevant and significant from scientific and practical perspectives. Today, it generates considerable public resonance. Prospective research on this issue will enable a deeper understanding of the mechanisms for ensuring religious peace and stability both in Ukraine and in Western European countries, which is an integral part of democratic development and international cooperation.

Keywords: information security, religious organizations, the existence of Ukrainians, state policy in the field of religion, privacy policy, civil society.

Background

Relevance of the topic. Over the years of independence, Ukraine has not developed a stable methodological approach to building information security in the religious sphere. As one of the post-Soviet countries, Ukraine emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union as a polyconfessional and multinational state. The presence of numerous religious organizations with a long history and traditions has shaped a unique national cultural landscape, customs, and rituals. However, over three and a half decades of independence, the religious issue in Ukraine remains one of the most significant conflict-generating factors, periodically escalating into tensions. The development of civil society based on the model of modern Western democracy is impossible without the peaceful coexistence of representatives of different religious denominations within the same territory. Adherence to the fundamental principles of tolerance should contribute to the harmonization of state-church and interfaith relations in contemporary Ukraine.

Religious tolerance is one of the fundamental values of modern democratic society, ensuring peace, stability, and mutual understanding among different national, religious, and cultural communities. In today's secularized world, globalization processes are gaining significant intensity, which further highlights the importance of religious and intercultural tolerance. Russia's war against Ukraine has demonstrated the close connection between religion and the security dimension, affecting both individual states and the international community as a whole. Therefore, the relevance of this study is driven by the interrelation between interfaith and state-church relations in Ukraine and their

direct connection to national security issues. Moreover, the religious question in Ukraine has gained international attention, with the issue of religious tolerance in the country being actively discussed by the leaders of major Western democracies.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The proposed article is one of the first academic explorations of a new understanding of the security issue in the context of interreligious conflicts. Today, the global community is reassessing the distorted religious-political doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), one of the largest Christian organizations in Europe. Concepts such as the "Triune Rus'", the "Russian World", and the "grace-filled Russia versus the sinful West" have had a toxic impact on shaping a new order of interaction among Local Orthodox Churches worldwide. Religious controversies and security issues in Europe are now closely interconnected. This article represents one of the first political science studies dedicated to examining the interdependence of state policy in the religious sphere, European experiences in interfaith relations, national security, and the formation of a new Local Church. This complex set of issues has been one of the primary causes of the invasion of Ukraine. According to the leading contemporary Orthodox theologian, a former member of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), Archimandrite Cyril (Hovorun), the activities of the UOC-MP in Ukraine have become a crucial "bargaining chip" in the negotiation process between the United States, Russia, and Ukraine (Hovorun, 2025).

The foundation of classical research in the field of interfaith relations and Ukraine's security policy traditionally includes the works of I. Bohachevska, V. Bondarenko,

S. Bortnyk, K. Govorun, O. Horkusha, V. Voynalovych, Father Heorhii Kovalenko, A. Kolodnyi, O. Predko, O. Sahan, L. Filipovych, Yu. Chornomorets, and many others. Referring to the works of these domestic and foreign scholars has facilitated the analysis of religious and security policy in Ukraine, particularly in the context of Ukrainian-European cooperation and the joint struggle against the aggressor.

The purpose of this article is to analyze state policy in the religious sphere in the context of national security and the formation of a common Ukrainian-European space for combating Russian occupation. Intense interfaith interactions and poorly conceived state-church relations have led to the absence of dialogue based on tolerance. The ban on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) is, on the one hand, an obvious and justified step in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine. However, it has also sparked significant resistance both within Ukrainian society and among the global community. Therefore, studying the interdependence of security factors and state policy in the religious sphere becomes even more relevant. Particular attention is given to the development of new effective mechanisms for combating religious intolerance.

Methods

The research methodology was based on methods such as systemic and structural-functional analysis, synthesis, comparison, and generalization. Content analysis and the historical approach were also of particular importance. Additionally, a key method for all political science studies is the behavioral approach, which involves examining human behavior and the ability of individuals to coexist within a shared social environment.

Results

In any democratic society that upholds freedom of conscience and religious belief, there are inevitably diverse religious, cultural, and ethnic communities and groups. The process of their peaceful coexistence depends on numerous factors. First and foremost, these include historical traditions and the experience of interfaith and state-church relations. Secondly, the level of cultural development plays a significant role. Thirdly, existing legislation regulating religious freedom is a crucial factor. Fourthly, the attitudes of adherents of different religious organizations and their spiritual centers also influence this process (Kuzmuk, & Petruk, 2018). Thus, the degree of mutual respect, and indeed the very possibility of coexistence within a shared territory, is contingent upon multiple factors – primarily, the disposition of believers themselves and their religious leaders.

Given the multiculturalism that has historically developed in Ukraine, it is essential to find ways to ensure peaceful coexistence and constructive dialogue. Clearly, for further improvement of the situation, it is necessary to substantiate and establish principles that would enable the harmonization of interfaith relations within the framework of Ukrainian state-building (Kobetiak, 2015, p. 81)

The concept of tolerance has always been significant; however, it began to be widely applied during the era of European interreligious conflicts. It became evident that Catholics and Protestants could not achieve dominance over one another through theology or missionary efforts. For Ukraine, which is currently experiencing war, establishing tolerant relations among representatives of different religious communities is a strategic task, as it is directly linked to the security dimension and the national identity of Ukrainians.

In its literal translation from Latin, *tolerantia* means "patience". However, modern researchers such as A. Kobetiak, A. Kolodnyi, P. Saukh, and L. Filipovych, whose views are worth considering, argue that such a translation

inaccurately (and narrowly) conveys the essence of this concept, impoverishing its meaning. In the Russian language, for example, "tolerance" traditionally implies merely a willingness to indulgently accept another opinion, often carrying a connotation of condescension toward others (Kobetiak, 2023, p. 104).

Indeed, in the tradition of East Slavic languages, the term "tolerance" is often associated with the word "терпимость" (tolerance, forbearance). However, in our understanding, tolerance is not merely passive coexistence or religious indifference (apathy), which leads not to respect for others but to general indifference toward anything "different" (Gavrilyuk, 2011, p. 108). Tolerance is not about "enduring" out of mercy or pity; rather, it is about empathy, active engagement, understanding, recognition, and acceptance of the "other" as an equal. Most importantly, it implies openness and a willingness to engage in equal and constructive dialogue. The modern world and contemporary living conditions dictate that people do not simply want to be "tolerated"; they seek acknowledgment and respect for their personal choices.

In the general perception of a 21st-century democratic society, religious tolerance as a socio-cultural phenomenon serves as the foundation for the peaceful coexistence and interaction of religious communities within a shared territory (for example, within the borders of a single country). This understanding of tolerance implies the recognition of every individual's right to their own religious beliefs and practices, the absence of discrimination based on religion, and, most importantly, a willingness for dialogue and cooperation (Ishchuk, & Sagan, 2022, p. 22).

Large-scale global conflicts, such as those in Ukraine and the Gaza Strip, have a pronounced religious dimension. Therefore, the impact of religious tolerance on the national security of any country is evident. This influence can manifest through the reduction of interfaith conflicts, the prevention and eradication of extremism and xenophobia, the strengthening of social cohesion, and the reinforcement of national self-identification, including through a shared religious framework. In particular, in democratic societies, where freedom of religion and equality of rights are theoretically guaranteed at the legislative level, a favorable environment for peaceful coexistence and constructive dialogue is established. At the beginning of the 21st century, such harmonious coexistence became known as multiculturalism (Saukh, 2001).

The term "multiculturalism" emerged in academic discourse in the early 1990s. It denotes a respectful attitude of the majority population toward minorities, the equal status of different cultural traditions, and an individual's right to choose their identity. A key defining feature of multiculturalism is the ability to preserve one's identity within a multicultural society despite the influence of other cultures. Ukrainian researcher Svitlana Drozhzhyna, whose perspective is worth considering, notes that contemporary philosophers, legal scholars, and political scientists define multiculturalism as a new ideology, policy, and social discourse that recognizes the value and legitimacy of cultural pluralism as well as the significance of religious diversity. The fundamental factor of a multicultural and multi-religious society should be universal human values and the uncompromising observance of human rights in all spheres of life, including the protection of national, political, religious, and linguistic rights. This, in turn, fosters a process of steady democratization of society, modeled after the Western world. Thus, only multiculturalism, based on universal human values and principles of equal coexistence among

various forms of cultural life—including subcultural forms—should become a new unifying ideology that contributes to strengthening security factors (Drozhzhyna, 2008, p. 104).

Legal mechanisms, social initiatives, and modern educational programs play a crucial role in ensuring religious tolerance. Before the war, Ukraine had gained significant experience in this area. The interfaith situation, compared to the 1990s, had stabilized considerably. While there was tension between the newly established Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), it was neither overt nor aggressive. The active phase of parish transitions from the UOC-MP to the OCU had already concluded by 2020. Thus, over 30 years of independence, governance institutions largely succeeded in establishing interfaith and state-church relations that could be characterized as peaceful and tolerant. With few exceptions, religious tolerance in Ukraine was based on a general declaration of peace, a policy of non-interference in the affairs of other religious denominations, respect for differing views, and a relatively democratic legal framework in the realm of freedom of conscience (Clark, & Vovk, 2019).

In addition to stabilizing interchurch relations, the security situation in Ukraine also significantly improved. Despite Russian aggression and the ongoing Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO), religious organizations—especially after the Revolution of Dignity—played a positive role in stabilizing society. They actively participated in prisoner exchanges, peacekeeping efforts, the establishment of military chaplaincy, and international peace missions. These underscore significant achievements in interfaith dialogue, although several challenges remain due to political and social factors. European practices, particularly through organizations such as the Council of Europe and the OSCE, offer effective approaches to strengthening religious tolerance as an essential component of national and international security. Thus, over the years of independence, Ukraine has largely succeeded in developing a comprehensive model of state-church and interfaith relations that aligns with the European model of civil society in a multicultural environment (Boreyko et al., 2021).

Despite significant positive aspects of state policy in the religious sphere, a constructive dialogue between the hierarchs and adherents of Ukraine's two largest religious denominations has not been achieved. The key goal of Orthodox reform in Ukraine—all the radical actions of the Ecumenical Patriarch, which largely led to a crisis in the Universal Church, as well as the efforts of numerous Ukrainian and global theologians and hierarchs—was the formation of a Single Local Church in Ukraine. However, this primary goal has not been realized.

Another significant conflict-generating factor is the presence of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine's religious landscape. For a long time, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) positioned itself as a separate structural and administrative unit of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) "with broad autonomy rights". After the Council in Feofaniya in May 2022, the UOC declared full independence from the Moscow Patriarchate. All references to affiliation with the Russian Church were removed from its Statute. Metropolitan Onufriy introduced specific liturgical modifications, characteristic only of the Primate of an independent Church, while some dioceses openly declared their complete break with the ROC. However, a special religious studies examination, conducted by the State Service for Ethnopolitics and Freedom of Conscience, confirmed the continued affiliation with the Moscow Patriarchate (Conclusion of the religious expert examination ..., n.d.).

From the end of 2022, a new phase in church-state relations in Ukraine began. A new head of the State Service for Ethnopolitics and Freedom of Conscience was appointed—Professor Viktor Yelensky, a former MP from the European Solidarity party and an active advocate of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU). President Volodymyr Zelensky, previously a passive-neutral observer of religious affairs, transformed into a lobbyist for the Ukrainian Church. At the same time, on August 20, 2024, the Parliament adopted Bill No. 8371, banning religious organizations affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). Gradually, the OCU took on the role of a state church, displacing its long-time leader, Patriarch Filaret. Meanwhile, the UOC continued to lose parishes, which transitioned to the OCU. It became labeled as a collaborator church, accused of cooperating with the aggressor state. In various regions, criminal cases were initiated against clergymen, including well-known hierarchs, with some facing long-term imprisonment (Kuzio, 2022).

The new aggressive state policy in the religious sphere has led to further parish transitions, instability in interfaith relations, and tensions in the interaction between the Church and local authorities. The possibility of a constructive dialogue in the UOC–OCU–state format has been lost. Amid the ongoing war with Russia, this significantly affects the stability of the state and serves as a major conflict-generating factor within the country. Religious conflicts and public resistance against the perceived "persecution" of Orthodox believers undermine national security, which remains a top priority today. Moreover, there is growing speculation that the UOC issue could become a key topic in U.S.–Russia negotiations. Recent statements by newly elected Donald Trump align with the possibility of a scenario where UOC churches and property could be returned.

Finally, it is essential to emphasize that in such complex and unpredictable wartime conditions, marked by widespread misinformation, rapidly shifting geopolitical intentions of our overseas partners, and an oppressive interfaith situation, a new model of state-church relations must be developed. This model should be effective regardless of changes in state leadership or political directions. It must remain independent of political agendas, ensuring harmonious and stable relations between religious organizations, based on peaceful yet competitive cooperation. Only then will global transformations and shifts in Ukraine's international interactions not pose a critical threat to interfaith relations within the country (Hovorun, 2016, p. 290).

Discussion and conclusions

Summarizing the findings, it is important to highlight that Ukraine's experience in state policy within the religious sphere, particularly in its connection to national security, demonstrates significant achievements in the development of interfaith dialogue. However, a number of challenges remain, primarily related to political and social factors. Ukraine's cooperation with European partners in this context includes experience exchange, the development of joint projects and programs aimed at strengthening interreligious dialogue and preventing conflicts based on religious differences. Such collaboration not only enhances security levels but also creates conditions for the harmonious coexistence of various religious traditions, fostering the development of an open and tolerant society.

The issue of tolerance in the religious sphere and its security dimension in the context of Ukraine-Europe interaction remains relevant and significant both from a scientific and practical perspective. Research in this area allows for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that ensure religious peace and stability, which are essential for

democratic development and international cooperation. The scientific interest in this topic is expected to grow. Without the involvement of government officials, religious and political experts, philosophers, sociologists, and other specialists, it is impossible to develop a well-thought-out and effective model of cooperation between state institutions and religious organizations. Only such collaboration can contribute to harmonizing interfaith interactions based on tolerance. In turn, peaceful cooperation between religious organizations is a crucial component of national security, both in Ukraine and on a broader European scale.

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РЕЛІГІЙНА ТОЛЕРАНТНІСТЬ ТА БЕЗПЕКОВИЙ ВИМІР: УКРАЇНСЬКО-ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКА ВЗАЄМОДІЯ

Вступ. Наголошено, що релігійна толерантність є однією з основних цінностей сучасного демократичного суспільства, яка сприяє збереженню миру, забезпечує стабільність та взаєморозуміння між різними національними та етнокультурними спільнотами. Установлено, що в сучасному секуляризованому суспільстві питання релігійної толерантності набувають особливого значення. Доведено, що значна кількість населення налаштована агресивно лише тому, що володіє недостатньою інформацією про вірян інших конфесій. Висловлено переконання, що релігійні процеси в Україні тісно пов'язані з безпековим виміром як окремих держав, так і міжнародної спільноти.

Методи. Застосовано низку методів: історичний аналіз для вивчення міжконфесійних та державно-церковних відносин у динаміці та історичній ретроспективі; контент-аналіз для вивчення поточної ситуації у безпековому просторі релігійної площини; герменевтичний метод – для вивчення статутів та основних сакральних текстів представлених в Україні конфесій; порівняльний метод – для зіставлення даних показників служби з етнополітики та релігійних звітів і статистик; метод експертних оцінок та статистичний аналіз різноманітних соціологічних даних пов'язаних із толерантністю міжконфесійних взаємин. Використання низки філософських та загальнонаукових методів дозволило всебічно дослідити та спрогнозувати конфесійну структуру українського суспільства.

Результати. Обґрунтовано, що Україна як частина європейського простору активно співпрацює з міжнародними інституціями у сфері забезпечення міжконфесійного миру, захисту прав і свобод віруючих. В Україні задекларована боротьба з релігійною дискримінацією на найвищому рівні. Однак виявлено, що в умовах сучасних викликів, передусім відкритої війни, міграційних процесів, росту радикальних настроїв, питання релігійної толерантності є невід'ємною частиною стратегії забезпечення національної та міжнародної безпеки.

Висновки. Доведено, що тема релігійної толерантності та безпекового виміру в контексті українсько-європейської взаємодії є актуальною і важливою як з наукового, так і з практичного погляду. Сьогодні вона викликає значний суспільний резонанс. Перспективні дослідження цієї проблематики дозволять глибше зрозуміти механізми забезпечення релігійного миру та стабільності як в Україні, так і в країнах Західної Європи, що є невід'ємною частиною демократичного розвитку й міжнародної співпраці.

Ключові слова: інформаційна безпека, релігійні організації, буття українців, державна політика у сфері релігії, політика конфіденційності, громадянське суспільство.

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